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The above case illustrates how it was possible for a man, in spite of a poor start in life, to rise. Children were instructed by their elders, as was Thick by his maternal uncle: "Above all things try to have horses. Try to have property and whatever you have, take care of it. By having lots of horses and property, people will respect you and look upon you as somebody." 556 867

Again Coming Daylight stated: "They used to think more of horses than of anything else. They were sure proud of owning a pinto pony. In telling stories when they wanted to describe the best they could think of they would say: 'You should have seen her horse—it was a big pinto pony.'" And in telling of a relative of hers, Woman Chief, Coming Daylight said: "Her husband was not very handsome, but they were well-to-do and she always rode top horses." 554 231

While all horses were as a rule well cared for, special attention was devoted to the buffalo horses. On the hunt, for instance, these horses would be led along unburdened by pack or rider to keep them fresh. They were ridden only for the actual chase and after the kill were turned loose to roll around and graze like young colts. When the butchering was completed the meat was packed on other horses and the swift buffalo horses were then led home again. These horses were ridden on social and ceremonial occasions, when their owners wished to show off, and of course the soldier societies were well mounted, but such use amounted to no more than a good work-out, and these valuable horses were never abused nor wilfully exhausted. 231

Children were exhorted to take care of their property, especially of horses, and the girls were advised that "a mare is worth everything—it increases—treat her well." It was stated that some attention was given to breeding. A man might judge that a colt showed possibilities of becoming a fast horse. If it fulfilled the early promise the colts it sired would be watched. The less likely of these would be castrated. Likewise, a good mare would, if possible, be retained by the owner for breeding. A man who owned a particularly good buffalo horse might, on his deathbed, either order that it be killed at his grave or give it to some relative he knew cared well for horses, with instructions never to abuse it nor give it away. [867] [763 768 431]

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439 wives had vowed to cover a Pipe, undoubtedly he would try to include in his purchases the requisite length of black cloth. Individuals of course differed. In view of their labor, the wives would expect to share in the return therefor which the husband was able to secure from the trader, but this expectation was not always met.[11]

The items thus obtained were consumed by the Gros Ventres in the same ways as those goods of their own manufacture—some being directly consumed, some entering into further production, and some being exchanged on the principle of gifts and of payments for services, and in gambling.

554 A man would accumulate a surplus only to expend it as
431 generously as possible in order to attain prestige. The person with
439 a reputation for generosity rose in public esteem, and was in turn the recipient of many gifts, whereas the man with only one horse and only one wife could not afford to meet the demands for hospitality and for generosity in other transactions, and thus could not profit by the system of indirect and deferred exchange.

262 Sharing of food was an important element in attaining prestige
574 through generosity. A person known to be stingy with food would
554 lack status. The ideal was often preached to children embodied in
867 such statements as the following: "If you have visitors, even though you don't have much food, give the last of it to them."

574 Should a male visitor drop in unexpectedly, the first thing a man did was to tell his wife to cook and she was expected to comply. How seriously this was regarded may be seen from the following case told by Singer: "One time my husband, Iron Bucket, went with a friend to visit the latter's brother. The sister-in-law was naturally a stingy woman and made no move to feed them. Her husband was sitting there fixing arrows and he told her: 'Hurry and cook. If you have nothing, ask for meat at one of the lodges.' This woman had a big shaggy head and sat there with her head bowed and her husband couldn't make her move. After a while, however, some meat was brought in from hunting, and this woman went out, got it and threw it down hard inside her lodge. She was mad. And instead of giving them in a nice way the manifolds and liver that they ordinarily eat first, she slung

[11] For a case in point, see p. 178.

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868 ered the most difficult of all tasks allotted to women and not every one was able to do it.

183 The whole training of the girl was oriented toward marriage. A girl was supposed to have been ignorant in sex matters until 864 informed by an older person, presumably in most cases by a grand- 867 mother. Coming Daylight, for example, remembers very distinctly that when she was about ten years old and the man who became her first husband had asked her uncle for her, her grandmother warned her: "Don't be 'ashamed' of your husband." The old woman then told Coming Daylight what to expect as to the physical side of marriage. Her grandmother also told her many other things, as was usual for a girl about to be married. "Now you are going to be married. You be true to your man. If some young fellow comes to you and wants to 'throw in with you,' you tell him no. But refuse him in a nice way and don't say bad things. Try to get out of it nicely. Then go right to your husband and tell him what happened, because if he sees you talking to another man he might get the wrong impression and think you have consented. Moreover, never become jealous of your husband nor should you ever fight back at any woman who might attack you on account of wanting him. Just pity such a woman. Always remember you are the wife; the other woman is not married to him but you are."

Just before she went with her husband to his home, an uncle of hers came to Coming Daylight and told her to tend to her house well, to make clothes for her husband and to see to it that he was always nice and clean. Then he added that she should not get mad or pout if her husband should go out and stay away longer than she thought he should. He said: "When a woman gets mad from this cause, she wants to make her own life bad. When her husband goes around visiting other women, and his wife finds out, then she wants to run around with men. If she retaliates in this way she only gets herself in bad. What you should do when your husband goes out and stays late is to say nothing when he comes in. He will always come back to you. You just say to yourself that he is your man and that he won't leave you permanently for any other woman."

It would seem that girls, as part of their training, were con-

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stantly admonished to stay at home after they were married and not to go visiting and gossiping with other women. Mothers told their daughters to be respectful to their husbands. When still very young, a girl was taught to "always make a lot over a man." She started with her father and was responsible, for instance, for seeing to it that in the morning when he awakened there was water beside him so he could wash his face before going for his morning bath, and that his breakfast would be ready for him when he came back therefrom. These are the kinds of things girls would be expected to do later for their husbands.

All during the time they were learning domestic skills, girls were told that they should keep everything that they own nicely and to have on hand everything they may need. It was not good to run around and borrow. "Keep your house clean and keep everything in good order, then your husband will like to stay at home." Again, "Don't let your husband's moccasins wear out before you make another pair. Always have things prepared ahead of time." Girls were told, too, that good wives took their husband's moccasins off for them when they came home tired, and so on.

Coming Daylight always admonished her daughters: "Never talk back to your husband. Women have fiery tongues when they get mad, and that is bad." It was nearly always taken for granted by others that the wife was to blame if her husband beat her. Since it was customary for very young girls to marry men very much older than they, such husbands took upon themselves the role of disciplinarian.

While marriage was taken for granted, apparently a girl was free to accept or to reject medicine power. Neither girls nor women went on power quests, but some individuals were vouchsafed some kinds of supernatural power in dreams. While the experience of Coming Daylight may be unique, it is illuminating. "Even before I was married, I had a particular kind of dream which indicated power to extract illness from the body of a patient. This dream occurred four nights in succession. Each morning I would tell my grandmother about it. The old woman got angry each time and told me not to talk about it, to keep it to myself so that I would become a great doctor. But I had already

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861 to their daughters.[10] The lecturing of the child started when he was an infant and continued until adulthood had been attained. Those charged with the training of children felt it to be a duty. As Coming Daylight put it: "They talked to their children right from the start, and before the babies themselves were able to talk, they seemed to understand." Singer remarked that, because modern parents do not talk to infants as the old-fashioned ones used to do, present-day infants do not respond by trying to "talk back." Nowadays, the two old women insisted, even infants pay no attention to instruction, and as for older children, some go so far as to tell their elders to shut up!

Under the old regime, however, a child had to listen, whether he wanted to or not, and he had to retain, at least outwardly, a respectful attitude. Cora, for instance, said that she hated this being talked to. Her father was the one who did the lecturing in her family and he used to require that she stand in one spot and not move "while he preached about being good and the ways of doing everything." Singer and Coming Daylight admitted that it was tiresome for the child to be continuously lectured, but they insisted that this is the best way for children to learn. Children [856] are supposed to really grasp what is being said to them from about the age of four.

867 Thick remembers the general content of the lectures he heard 183 from his mother to have run along these lines: "If you get a mare, treat it well because mares will increase. Take good care of her. If you get a saddle, hang on to it. Robes, bridles, whips, are needed useful articles, keep them, don't give them away. If you don't keep these things you will have to go and borrow from someone else. That is bad. If you have to borrow a horse from some other boy, his family might become suspicious of you; yet if they refuse, there are hard feelings over it. Therefore when you get something, take good care of it.

"When you go out to play with your own things, your bow and arrows or hoop, others will want you to play with them and to bet with them. If you join in such games, somebody is likely to get mad because you have won and so he may beat you up. If

[10] For details on kinship behavior, see pp. 107–08.

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he should, don't fight back. Let him take it out on you and don't fight back. 183 867

"When you are out playing, if you are hungry and you want to eat, come home. Don't go to any other family to eat because people are fond of their food and might resent it. If a boy, some friend of yours, invites you to his home, don't go."

Garter Snake's father was the one who lectured his children,—three sons and three daughters. Since she was Pipe Child, when her father was Keeper of the Feathered Pipe, Garter Snake was talked to by him more often perhaps than were her siblings. Long after she was married, her mother used to remind her of the things her father told her. Some of these admonitions were as follows: "I want you to be an upright, honest and straight woman. If you listen to everything I tell you and do as I tell you, in the future you will thank me for it. Now don't think you are alone in this world because the One above the White Man sees everything that we do. Don't steal, don't lie, don't be tricky. Be honest about everything.

"When you grow up and finally have your own home, pity the old men and pity the old women, pity the poor. If you see an old woman with a ragged dress, give her a blanket. Make moccasins for these old women. The same holds for these old men. If you see an old man whose leggings are torn, make leggings for him. If you see a poor person who needs clothes, give him some if you have any. If you do that the One Above who watches and looks at you doing those things, He is going to reward you. [888]

"When you are married and have your own home, take care of it well. If you have horses, take care of them; try to have good property and take care of it. If you do that you will always have something. If you have horses of your own that will help your husband. He may not have any and you can help him along.

"Be good to everybody. If a man or woman comes to visit, welcome them. Tell them: 'Come in and sit down.' Then feed them well regardless of whether they are poor or rich, young or old, or even children. [574]

"Above all, don't you ever quarrel with anyone. Don't you ever fight. Try to be friendly with everybody." [865]

Charles Buckman's uncle, who, like Garter Snake's father,

183 867 was not a Christian, used to tell him: "You have eyes to see, a heart to think, and ears to hear. Listen to what I will tell you. You are a poor boy. As such, be faithful. Believe in the One Above the White Man. Pray to Him, ask Him to have pity on you and so make you a good man some day. Try to be good to all, especially when you become a man. Be good to the poor, be good to the old. Never take anything not belonging to you. Never [865] speak evil of other people. Try to be patient. If a man says anything wrong to you, and hurts your feelings, say nothing because if folks talk back it causes quarreling or fighting, which is not good. If a poor man asks you for anything, if you have it, be ready to hand it over to him. If you see anybody hungry and [888] you have it, feed him. If an old man or woman is in need and wants anything done, do it for him or her. If you do these things, the One Above will have pity on you."

685 867 183 All informants agreed that in addition to having been told to take care of whatever property they might have, they were instructed to regard the property rights of others. It was believed that, though the theft remained undiscovered, the thief would be punished by automatic supernatural sanction. "Something terrible would happen to anybody who stole something." Mary's grandmother, for instance, had told her time and again never to take anything that did not belong to her. To illustrate how well this had been instilled into her, she gave the following example. "On one occasion when I was a child, I found a really beautiful string of beads, but I did not take it. After I got to bed that night, however, I told my grandmother about it. When asked why I had failed to bring home the beads, I replied: 'I was afraid you would tell me that I had taken them from someone.' My grandmother merely remarked: 'Well, you should have brought them to me, or better, you should have taken me to where they were lying.' But when I took her to the spot the next day the beads were gone."

[764] This reminded Coming Daylight of an incident in her own childhood. "I was walking near a grove of trees where several corpses had been placed (in the traditional manner of disposing of the dead). I noticed a considerable amount of bear excrement and mixed in it were a number of elk teeth—the most valuable

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trimming for women's clothing. I knew that the body of a girl had been among those left in the branches of the trees at this place, so I decided that the bear had disturbed the bodies and must have eaten the cloth along with everything else. I stood there quite a while wondering whether I should take those elk teeth. Finally I took them and having strung them on a piece of sinew laid them in the stream-bed with a rock covering them. When I went home I opened the matter with my grandmother by stating: 'A bear ate that girl who was buried in the elk tooth dress.' When my grandmother asked how I knew this, I told her about the elk teeth in the excrement. Whereupon my grandmother asked: 'Why didn't you take those teeth? They are valuable.' Feeling easier in my mind, I said: 'I was afraid you would accuse me of stealing them—but I did take them anyway!' My grandmother was glad and so I brought them from the creek and I was happy, too, since there were enough teeth to make two rows on my dress."

The usual procedure of careful parents when a child reported he had found some article was to first question him as to whether or not he had taken it from someone. Then the parent would go around and ask people if they had lost this certain article. If a child had stolen it he would thus be found out and it was believed that he would never steal anything again.

The rights of children to their own property were recognized by elders and, while they admonished children to take good care of their things, if a child wished to dispose of what belonged to him no one would reprimand him for having done so. After all, generosity is a trait that was much admired among the Gros Ventres. Informants said that if, for instance, a man had given a horse to his daughter and she gave it away, he would say nothing to her about it. Should she ask him for another he might, however, tell her: "Well, I don't know—you might give it away." But he would never scold her about it.

Even if a child were flagrantly disobedient he would ordinarily be punished only by a scolding rather than by whipping or deprivation. Singer and Coming Daylight both were shocked at the idea that a child might be punished by depriving him of something. They said: "Indians love their children and we don't think they would deprive them of anything. They just talk to their children

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183 861 other men so you will avoid your husband's suspicion," and so on. Sometimes the appeal was made by a parent: "If you do such and such a thing well, I will be proud of you." In general it would seem that the positive side rather than the negative, was stressed.

777 867 888 It was more often the men informants who mentioned supernatural motives proposed for proper conduct. They remembered that they were told that the Supreme Being would "have pity" on them if they followed the proper code of behavior. Both men and women mentioned, however, that respect for the aged was instilled because "people didn't become old for nothing. They had a blessing from the Supreme Being to live long lives. Whenever you see old people attempting to do something and are having difficulties, you should go right in and do it for them. Help old people out and then ask them to intercede for you that you will have good health, a long life and success in all your undertakings."

867 574 The example of others was recognized as effective in child-training. Al feels that the Gros Ventres were well brought up in the old days "because children were taught to stick to the rules and they had the good example of adults to follow." In describing the duty of hospitality, Coming Daylight said: "My grandmother was a great one to have a lot of visitors because she was generous, and so I got a good example at home." It was said by others of Coming Daylight: "She feeds everyone who comes along just as she used to see her uncle (mother's brother) do. She takes after her uncle in lots of ways."

In lecturing to the young, examples of actual behavior of persons, both good and bad, were often given. For instance, in warning boys of the evils of gambling, reference would be made to men who would otherwise have had promising careers but who ruined their chances by too heavy stakes which they lost. Fear [054] of offending those who had supernatural power lest they retaliate by means of black magic was implicit in at least some of the admonitions. This was so, for instance, in instructing young men to stay away from the wives of "powerful" men, as well as in warning girls to decline improper proposals "in a nice way."

CHAPTER X

OLD AGE AND DEATH

It is the opinion of the now aged Gros Ventres that the proportion of old persons was much greater in the past than it has been since they have taken up the white man's ways; and further, that the aged then retained their health and vigor to a greater degree.[1] One old woman stated that when she was young, there used to be many old people, but that they died off when there were no more buffalo. She added: "People lived to a good old age on the things that the Supreme Being provided,—roots, wild vegetables and fruits, dried meats and berries. In those days, too, they drank broth instead of tea and coffee. Old folks didn't lose their teeth then, although even young girls do nowadays. Their teeth eventually got worn down, but they seldom pulled them. In fact, if an old person should lose a tooth, he thought it was awful and was sure that he was ready for the grave. Furthermore, people didn't get white hair until they were ready for 'old age sleep'—very old people sleep most of the time—yet now one sees middle-aged and even younger people with gray hair like the whites have."

Status and Treatment of the Aged

It was believed that a person who had lived to a ripe old age had been privileged to do so by the Supreme Being. Therefore, they reasoned, if you are good to old people, these in turn will pray to the Supreme Being for your health, long life, and success. Children were instructed explicitly to be good to the aged,—to feed them, to clothe them, and to help them in difficulties,—as well as to seek out those so blessed and ask for their prayers. It was

[1] Allowance should of course be made for the fact that "old age" is a relative term. When it was said that young men were urged to marry "older experienced women," this referred to a woman of perhaps twenty to twenty-five. See pp. 171–72. A woman on the northern plains was "old" at forty, according to Denig, p. 513.